1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER ONE

THE LEPCHAS AND SIKKIM

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THE Lepchas[1] are a Mongoloid people living in the Himalayas on the southern and eastern slopes of Mount Kinchenjunga. It seems certain that they were originally the only inhabitants of this large tract of mountainous land, but during the last three centuries, or possibly longer, their land has been taken from them by conquering invaders, the Tibetans, the Nepali, and finally the English. At the time of the 1931 census the 25,780 registered Lepchas were almost evenly divided between the Native State of Sikkim and the Darjeeling district of British India, 13,000 being in Sikkim and the rest in Darjeeling, with the exception of 66 who were employed, chiefly as gardeners, in Calcutta.

There is no generally accepted theory among those anthropologists who believe that every tribe originally came from somewhere else as to the place of origin of the Lepchas. Various parts of Tibet and Mongolia have been suggested and a certain similarity has apparently been found between the Lepcha language and some dialect spoken in Indo-China. The Lepchas themselves have no tradition of migration and place the home of their ancestors—the people of Mayel—in one of the inaccessible valleys of Kinchenjunga.

The Lepchas do not appear ever to have resisted invasion of their own accord. Sikkim was apparently colonised by the Tibetans at some date prior to the beginning of the seventeenth century,[2]

[1] The Lepchas do not call themselves Lepchas; they call themselves *Rong*. 'Lepcha' is said to be a derogatory Nepali term—*lap-che*—meaning, though the philology is doubtful, 'nonsense talkers.' A parallel could be found in the Russian name for Germans—*nemetski*, which means 'the dumb ones.' Since books dealing with the people and district refer to the Lepchas as Lepchas, it would seem merely pedantic and confusing to use the term *Rong*. The word would appear to have no other significance in Lepcha.

[2] I take the suggestion that Sikkim (which at that date included the present Darjeeling district) was colonised or at least dominated by the Tibetans before the beginning of the seventeenth century from *An Account of Tibet* by the

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to him by his father, a black heifer called Katikmu, a present from his 'grandfather'[11] the second Dorjé Lapoon, and a tiny cardamum patch yielding half a maund, which was given to him by his mother's father, Lharibu Chujen. His twelve-year-old sister only possesses a single hen. Tempa's five-year-old daughter owns three chicks and a piglet. Only children, and the wives and children of the poorest people are the only ones not to possess any property. Land which is given as a gift can be given again as a gift provided it does not pass into the possession of people living under another Mandal; it cannot be sold without the permission of the Mandal and of the original owner.

All the land of Zongu belongs to the Maharajah and cannot be owned by anybody not of Lepcha blood. Transactions of land between residents inside Zongu need the consent of the Mandal, and if necessary the confirmation of the Court. In the event of a Lepcha from outside Zongu wishing to settle therein, he will apply to the Mandal in whose village he wishes to live, who will forward the request to Court. If the request is granted the Mandal will summon all his 'tenants' and instruct each of them to give the newcomer a strip of land; he himself will give a piece of uncleared forest. These pieces of land are really gifts; the immigrant only pays for them with a drink of *chi*. The Mandal, it is believed, will always be glad to get a new 'tenant'; the householders may dislike giving up their land, but there is nothing they can do about it. It is extremely rare for immigrants to arrive in this fashion; in the last thirty years only one such has come to Lingthem, and that was Katel, who followed home his runaway wife. Such strange men as do come to Zongu usually do so either through marriage or adoption.

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It is perhaps permissible to speculate a little on the historical development of the Lepchas of Zongu in regard to their food-getting habits. Primitive economies are usually divided into three

[11] Throughout this book I have put into quotation marks kinship terms when they are employed by the Lepchas in their extended meaning, in cases where they do not correspond to our classification. Thus the second Dorjé Lapoon is by our classification Chimpet's paternal grand-uncle; this actually has no corresponding term in Lepcha; and since both the two themselves and anybody else referring to them would call them 'grandfather' and 'grandson' I have consistently employed the Lepcha terminology.

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categories—food-gatherers, cultivators, and herders.[12] In a way the Lepchas today straddle all three types, though domestic animals play a relatively small part in their economy.

Lepcha tradition, as has already been stated, places the transition from food-gathering to cultivating about two centuries ago. But I question whether this statement can be taken at its face value. It is extremely difficult to count on the age of tradition or mythology, but it seems to me *ipso facto* improbable that the Mun mythology would have been completely changed and re-made after the Lepchas' conversion to lamaism. Now in the Mun ritual and validating mythology domestic animals play a very important part for they are the only acceptable articles of sacrifice; wild animals can only be used by hunters. Also the most constant and important of the Mun's calendrical ceremonies are connected with crops, and in particular with dry rice and millet. These are ceremonies which affect the whole population. There is also the tradition that, while the upper slopes of the valley were common ground until quite recent times, the land down by the river has been privately owned from time immemorial. The private ownership of uncultivated land which would never be particularly rich in game seems quite pointless.

It seems to me probable that up to about three centuries ago the Lepchas—presuming they were already living in the same country, and there seems no reason to question it—cultivated a certain amount of rice and millet on the lower slopes of the valley, probably selecting the wild varieties which grow in the Himalayan forests, and kept some domestic animals, probably oxen. They very likely did not cultivate enough for all their needs, and eked out the cultivated food with hunting and wild forest produce. When the tribes of Tibet, and later of Nepal, amalgamated into single states with expansionist policies, the Lepchas found themselves confronted with war-like enemies against whom they were practically defenceless, for in their lonely Himalayan valleys they can have seen few strangers. There is no account of their resisting the Tibetan colonisation, but they fled from the invading Nepali and Bhutanese. These foreigners represented for them death and slavery, at the least loss of their possessions; and so to save themselves they abandoned their cultivation and took to a nomadic life in the forests. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth

[12] See for example C. Daryll Forde's *Habitat, Economy and Society* (London 1934).

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

century Sikkim was, we know, the seat of constant wars; and it is not surprising that old Serving claims that about 1850 there were only four houses in Lingthem. As the country became peaceful the Lepchas settled down again to a mainly agricultural life, only to find, outside Zongu, that they were unable to compete with the more industrious and competent Nepali and Sikkimese. They had developed a way of life suitable for isolation; neither in war nor in competition could they stand up to other people. In the reserve of Zongu the introduction this century of cardamum and terraced fields bound them more securely to the land. They had neither time nor reason for hunting. The money-producing cardamum crop did away with the necessity, which existed in earlier times, of travelling to trade forest produce against cloth and salt and metal. From partial or complete nomadism the Lepchas have become almost completely attached to their fields; they have less reasons for dealing with strangers than at any time in the last three centuries. It is probable that this growing isolation will increase even more the Lepcha's great natural timidity in the face of an unknown person; even today 'unknown' has almost the same connotations as 'dangerous'.

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2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

CHAPTER 8

Houses and House-building

342 THE ordinary Lepcha house is extremely simple and generally contains but two rooms, one of which is used as a kitchen. In appearance it does not differ, except in size, from the monastery, which I take to be the prototype of Sikkim domestic architecture.

174 346 It seems likely that in Tibet the original monasteries also served as forts, as is often still the case. In view of the unsettled state of that country there was need for the people to keep close together; so that instead of living in scattered houses they all lived together inside the forts. As conditions became more peaceful the need to live in close proximity to others became gradually less urgent, but when the people came to build their own houses it was natural that they should take the local fort or monastery as their model, since they had none other. I am not suggesting that this also happened in Sikkim; and the transition in Tibet had probably taken place long before the Lepchas took to living in permanent houses. Sikkim, however, has always been in [177] 341 close cultural contact with Tibet; and in no way is the influence of the latter country more marked than in the local style of architecture. The extremely wet climate of Sikkim has of course made certain modifications necessary. Of these the most striking is the wide overhanging roof, which often projects as much as fifteen feet in front of the walls. It is one of the most pleasing features of all Sikkim houses, and has the additional advantage of keeping the walls completely dry throughout the rainy season.

In Tibet, monasteries, and in fact most houses, are usually built with very thick walls: they are sometimes as much as ten feet thick at the base. It is improbable that such thickness

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Before proceeding to narrate my different expeditions into Sikkim and Nepal from Dorjiling, I shall give a sketch of the different peoples and races composing the heterogeneous population of Sikkim and the neighbouring mountains.

The Lepcha is the aboriginal inhabitant of Sikkim, and the prominent character in Dorjiling, where he undertakes all sorts of out-door employment. The race to which he belongs is a very singular one; markedly Mongolian in features, and a good deal too, by imitation, in habit; still he differs from his Tibetan prototype, though not so decidedly as from the Nepalese and Bhotanese, between whom he is hemmed into a narrow tract of mountain country, barely 60 miles in breadth. The Lepchas possess a tradition of the flood, during which a couple escaped to the top of a mountain (Tendong) near Dorjiling. The earliest traditions which they have of their history date no further back than some three hundred years, when they describe themselves as having been long-haired, half-clad savages. At about that period they were visited by Tibetans, who introduced Boodh worship, the platting of their hair into pig-tails, and very many of their own customs. Their physiognomy is however so Tibetan in its character, that it cannot be supposed that this was their earliest intercourse with the trans-nivean races: whether they may have wandered from beyond the snows before the spread of Boodhism and its civilisation, or whether they are a cross between the Tamulian of India and the Tibetan, has not been decided. Their language, though radically identical with Tibetan, differs from it in many important particulars. They, or at least some of their tribes, call themselves Rong, and Arratt, and their country Dijong: they once possessed a great part of East Nepal, as far west as the Tambur river, and at a still earlier period they penetrated as far west as the Arun river.

10: Waddell G-5 (1891) 1899 AK5 Lepcha AK5

114 opposed to the views of Mr. Risley [1]), Colonel Dalton [2]), and other writers who have repeated the statements of the earlier travellers Drs. Campbell and Hookes, who mixed up the Lepchas a good deal with their Tibetan conquerors. For my results show, that

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A RONG OR LEPCHA.
(From photograph by Mr. Hoffmann).

the so-called Khamba-branch of the tribe are not Lepchas at all, but Tibetan invaders from the Kham province of Tibet; whereas the Lepchas are decidedly of Indo-Chinese origin

[1]) Tribes and Castes of Bengal. Calcutta 1869, IV. p. 5.
[2]) Ethnology of Bengal. Calcutta, 1872.

and seem to have entered their present country from 'Further-India' by way of the Asam valley; and they appear to be an outlying member of that group of wild tribes which are broadly known by their Indian title of *Naga* that is the hill-savages [1]). They are especially near the 'Arieng' or Mikir-Nagas of the Garo- and Kasia-hills, to the South of the Brahmaputra-valley, and have much in common with the *Ching-pó* or *Sing-po* — the 'Ka-chins' of the Burmese — as well as with that branch of the Malayan Indo-Chinese which has been named by the late Captain Forbes, the Mon-Anam family. Even linguistically they do not belong to the Tibetan group at all.

The Lepchas call themselves '*Rong*' which may be considered as their true tribal name; and it means in their vernacular 'an occupant', in the sense of aborigines or autochthones of the area. They have no tradition of having come from any other country and know nothing of their origin. The earliest mention we have of them is in Tibetan history which records them as inhabiting this country on the Tibetan invasion about 250 years. The term Lepcha or properly Lapcha or 'Lapche' is a Nepalese word, the contemptuous epithet applied to this tribe by their Nepalese neighbours. And it seems to me to mean 'the vile-speakers' [2]), because the Lepchas are the only tribe of the pre-Tibetan mongoloids of the Himalayas of Nepal and its borders, who have not adopted the externals of Hinduism and the Hindi dialect, the Parbatiya. The Tibetans, on the other hand, call the Lepchas, the 'people of the *Mon*-country' (*Mon-pa*, *Mon-rigs*, vulgarly *Mó-rik*), which is the general Tibetan name for the Lower Himalayas from Kumaon on the north-west to Asam in the south-east, as well as for Upper Burma. This name is doubtless related to the pre-Burmese inhabitants of Burma, the Mon or "Talaigno" who are now pressed down to the coast-line of Pegu.

The current name of the country, namely "Sikhim" [3]), is also Nepalese. The Lepchas call it 'the *Ne* country', or Ne-lyang, which is usually interpreted trough the Tibetan as 'the place of caves'. Caves, however, are not numerous in the tract occupied by the Lepchas. Possibly this name was originally applied to the whole of this part of the Himalaya, as the tract adjoining on the west is still called the country of the *Ne*-wars, that is 'the people of *Ne*'; whilst the affix 'pal' of the modern name of the country of the Newars, to wit, *Ne-pal*, curiously forms the old Tibetan name for that country, the modern name of which, it seems to me, may be derived from the juxta-position of these 'Ne' and 'Pal' countries.

The language of the Lepchas can scarcely be said to possess a written character. The so-called Lepcha character I found in 1891 (when investigating the history of the country for my section of the Sikhim Gazetteer), was invented only at the beginning of last century [4]) by a Lama-king of Sikhim, with a view to convert the Lepchas to Lamaism. He

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[1]) From the Sanskrit *Naga*, a hill; the word, as applied to hillmen, covers the sense of naked hill-savages (*Nanga*), and the myth which associates these wild hillmen or *Nagas* with snakes or *Naga*s is, I believe, comparatively modern and Brahmanical in origin.

[2]) It has its parallel in the Anglo-Saxon epithet of ‚Welsh' or ‚the Jabberers', the contemptuous term applied by the English to their less civilised neighbours in Wales; also perhaps ‚Barbarian' from bar-bar, onomatopoetic for gibberish. Cf. Taylor's „Names and Places", London, p. 67.

[3]) The most trustworthy form is 'Sikhim', not 'Sikkim'.

[4]) This fact was recorded by me in 1892 in my Section of the *Gazetteer of Sikhim*, but during the process of editing it got transferred with other notes of mine to the Chapters compiled by Mr. Paul (pp. 1—30), where it will be found at page 13 under the head of the Lama in question — Pag-dor Nam-gyal, who was the priest king of Sikhim, born 1688, died 1717 A. D.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Another weapon commonly used by the Rong is the knife Bakob. It has a straight blade and a gradually narrowing wooden hilt.

The Rong tribesman, in striking contrast to the other peoples, always carries his knife on his right hip while the others carry the Nepalese Kukuri on the left hip. The knife is the instrument most commonly used by the Lepchas. It serves to cut down trees, to divide the game and for countless other purposes.

That, in brief, is the equipment of the Lepcha hunters and their temperament. We have already seen how all this is linked with religion, *viz.* by the performance of sacrifices and the description of the hunt-deities. The Rong, or at least a part of them, have been, without doubt, originally, purely hunters. This belief is confirmed by Gorer, "According to Kahlyeu, (and the tradition is supported by others) until the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Lepcha were entirely nomadic, only building temporary huts and travelling about the forests, living on such animals they could kill, and wild plants of which the Lepcha have considerable knowledge, for they know the edible (but not, as European tradition believes, the medicinal) properties of nearly every plant and tree. Iron for knives, Kahlyeu says, was introduced in the time of his father's grandfather, that is to say, the first half of the eighteenth century. About a generation later the Lepcha started living in permanent houses and were able to hold or increase their stock of domestic animals. Private property in the land must have developed somewhat later."[108]

Besides being hunters the Rong are also farmers. According to their legends they obtained their first seeds of dry rice, millet, maize and gurkins from their ancestral spirits in Mayal. They came as hunters to the land of their ancestors and were asked whether they possessed any grains for food. As they replied in the negative, they were given grain with instruction about its cultivation. At first, rice was used only for sacrificial purposes. They could only test whether the rice was ready by biting it with their teeth, and when they did so they found that the rice was sweet, and henceforward they began to eat rice as a food.

108. Gorer, op. cit. p. 69 sq.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

rice as a food. The fact that the offering of sacrifices to the deities concerned with farming was preponderantly a woman's concern, leads us to conclude that farming was originally the work of the women. In the olden days the fields were burnt out in order to prepare them for the plantation. Part of the forest was burnt, cleaned up, and the cultivation of grain would be carried on for one or two years, after which the tribesmen would move away to another area. This is known as shifting cultivation. Today, the burning of fields is controlled by government, lest too much damage be done to the forests. The permanent field system is the common practice today. (Fig. 25-27)

The Rong originally dug up their fields with the use of the hoe, and they did not use the plough. They have taken over the plough only recently from the Indians and the Nepalese. The Lepcha's knowledge of farming was very elementary and they could by no means compete with the Indian and Nepalese farmers. There was a reason behind this. The Lepchas were not totally dependent for their existence on farming, for the collection of roots and plants, and hunting, offered them rich sources of nourishment. A little cattle-breeding goes hand in hand with farming. They keep a few cattle and goats ; sheep are kept very seldom, and at the most one or two pigs. The cattle are the mountain Zebu. The humps of these animals are feebly developed, but for the rest they are strong animals. The Zebu are generally of a black colour. The goats are of a poor variety and have no special breed. The pig, which is different in shape from the black Chinese pig, has as its forbear the black Himalayan boar. The stomach of the pig does not hang down low ; it has small erect ears, a strong mane of bristles, and a long and pointed head. A Lepcha who is well off keeps about eight to ten cattle, and among these are two pairs of oxen for cultivation. The other animals are milk cows and calves. The milk provided by these animals is used mainly for tea ; but occasionally butter is made from it. The number of goats reared is also not very large—ranging from ten to fifteen among the richer folk. The cattle and goats are driven to the grassy slopes for grazing throughout the day and in the evening they return to their stalls. (Fig. 28)

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

dress is with sleeves) held with a girdle, and a jacket over it. The head gear consists of a cloth worn in the manner of the Nepalese women. The old head-dress for the men was a thimble-shaped hat woven from bamboo; see book-cover. (Fig. 33-36).

The Rong folk wear rings, bracelets, and necklaces as ornaments. But one will never come across a case of a Rong wearing any ornamentation to the nose, the feet and the toes. The most common implement used by the women is the sickle. A bent sickle hook-shaped at the upper end is called bahur in the Lepcha tongue, and kurpa in Nepalese. It is used for cutting wood and the branches of trees. Another kind of sickle, in the shape of a half moon, is called angsu (sikāl in Nepalese) and is used to mow grass and weeds. The third type has a toothed edge, and is used as a kind of saw. It is called angsu in Lepcha and ancher in Nepalese. A girl is given her sickle at the age of seven or eight, and the boy his knife, so that from a very early age they may be able to practise the use of the most universal of instruments. Usually it is carried in the belt at the back. (Fig. 37-44)

The most important of the implements used for farming is the wide shovel-like hoe, and it is used for loosening the earth and clearing it of weeds. There are in addition two or three pronged hoes used for loosening the earth and relieving it of weeds.

The plough has been taken over from the Nepalese. It consists of a horn shaped piece of wood, which is tipped by the iron ploughshare. The drawing beam goes up from the centre and above is the plough handle with a handle to steer with. The beam is fixed to the yoke which is drawn by two oxen.

The economy of the Rong corresponds entirely with that of the other mountain peoples of South-East Asia and South China, *e.g.* the Miau. They were originally hunters who have taken over to farming. They have certainly not learnt the old agricultural economy from other peoples, but they absorbed into themselves the people who practised the arts of farming. Domestic animals are reared mainly for the purpose of sacrifice and not for any economic gain, and they are of the greatest importance. The combination of hunting with

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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farming must already have been effected by the Rong in very early times. 205 174

Gorer believes that the Rong were hunters about three hundred years ago, and that they carried on a little farming with dry rice and millet and kept a few cattle. When the Bhutanese and the Nepalese overran the land, the Lepchas withdrew into the forests, where they gave up farming and lived solely by hunting. When peace was restored they again took up to farming.[100]

(*l*) The Anthropological classification of the Rong

There are two basic types among the Lepchas which have to be clearly differentiated. The one with the long small face, the high forehead, the high narrow nose, and the well-defined eye-brow prominences; the eye is mostly without the Mongolian fold (if the upper lid droops it does not cover the inner corner of the eye). The face is also well-modelled; the cheek bones are not very prominent. The form of the head is mesocephalic or dolichocephalic. These people are taller and somewhat above the average height. The colour of the skin is light yellow. (Fig. 45). 142 141

The other type has a wide short face, a wide low forehead, well-defined supra-orbital ridges, a broad nose with depressed root and cheek bones that are somewhat more prominent. The eye often shows the Mongolian fold. The lips are thin, the shape of the head is brachycephalic, and the colour of the skin light yellow. Both the types have a slight growth of beard and a scanty growth of hair all over the body. The Mongolian spot occurs among most of the children of both types. The Lepchas call the spot "ri-om" and say that children without the spot are delicate. (Fig. 46)

The Rong have well-proportioned bodies. The muscles of the thigh and calves are particularly well-formed because of the fact that they are tireless mountain climbers. On the average however, the Rong are more lightly built than the neighbouring people. The women have very finely cut features.

100. *op. cit.* p. 110.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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In the anthropology of the Rong, a two-fold classification is shown : a Mongoloid and a non-Mongoloid element. Our investigation has shown us this two-fold element in the religion and the economy of the Lepchas. From an anthropological standpoint we would like to draw a line of difference between the hunters and the farmers, thus forming two typical groups. The hunters with their hunting religion, sociology and economy represent the tall Rong type and are characterised by the larger physical build, the long small face, the open eye and the long small high nose. The farmers, on the other hand constitute the second group with shorter physiques, broad faces, broad nose, Mongolian eyefold, and prominent cheek bones.

Thus we see that the Rong bear evidences of a mixed culture, and this helps to solve many contradictions concerning them. Some believe that they have connections with the Tibetans. Others say that they wandered from the east along the Burma-Assam mountains. Our own belief is that the hunting component of the Rong are the primitive indigenous inhabitants of the forests of Sikkim. The farmers came from the east and have connections with such people as the Naga, the Lolo and the Miau.

The Rong language belongs to the pure group, that is to say, to the pronounless Himalayan group of the Tibeto-Burman languages. This bears out the facts that they experienced no Austro-Asiatic influence in the language as the Limbu did. Consequently the Austro-Asiatics cannot be held responsible for the non-Mongoloid element among the Lepchas. The only possibility is that among the pure Tibeto-Burmans and in a wider sense among the Tibeto-Chinese, there is an element purely non-Mongoloid and another that is Mongoloid. The study of the Rong therefore throws light on the Mongoloid problem and shows a formation of the Mongoloids within the Tibeto-Chinese Family (Tibeto-Burman is the large sub-group of this family of languages) and, in a very marked manner, among the farming peoples. This is in perfect agreement with the results of our research in Tibet. I found that the Tibetan Mongoloids are represented among the farming population. The cattle breeding nomads have very few Mongoloid features or none at all. Hence it is that

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
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in Tibet also, the Mongoloids are farmers. In the regions of North-West China, in Tsing-hai and Kan-su, we found that in many Chinese, living there, the Mongoloid element was completely lacking or present in a very negligible manner. These people are also of a larger build ; they have the long, high-bridged noses, the long narrow faces and in many cases the Mongolian fold is not to be found. One might object that this was due to the influence of non-Mongoloid peoples like the Tibetans and the Turks who repeatedly overran these districts and ruled over the people for long periods of time. We shall refer later to the Mongoloids in China. At this stage it can be said that in China, the pure Mongoloids came from the farming inhabitants in Eastern and Central China as we have proved in the first chapter. One cannot quote the Mongols as counter evidence, as they are a very mixed and younger culture with strong agricultural influences.

We shall not deal in a detailed manner with the customs and habits of the Lepchas at birth, betrothal, marriage, death and burial. There is only one more point which I should like to touch upon : the judging of the Lepchas through the descriptions of European authors like Gorer and C.J. Morris. The two authors describe these people as being dominated by a strong, a very strong, sex complex. J. H. Hutton remarks in his foreword to Gorer's book, "Another aspect of Lepcha life which is almost as striking as the absence of aggression, is the apparent obsession of the whole community with sex. I was tempted to suppose that the author of this book had overemphasised the Lepchas' attitude to sex through an unconscious dramatisation, a journalistic dramatisation, if I may call it so, of a want of reticence on sexual matters of all kinds in a degree quite unfamiliar in his own society. The perusal, however, of Mr. Morris's book shows that I did Mr. Gorer an injustice. At the same time I am rather inclined to feel that the apparent preoccupation of the Lepchas with sex does not necessarily imply that the importance attached to it by them in their lives is proportionately theatrical. One is inclined to wonder whether this consciousness of sex is the cause or the result of the Lepchas' declining population, a decline of which the Lepchas are acutely aware. Probably, if there is any such connection at all it is by now a vicious